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76 MAY

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MARVEL® COMICS GROUP



KUNG FU
02449

THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI, MASTER OF KUNG FU

BATTLE ON THE WATERFRONT!



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"Call me Shang-Chi, as my father did, when he raised me in the vacuum of his Honan, China retreat. Since then, I have learned that my father is Dr. Fu Manchu, the most insidiously evil man on earth...and that to honor him would bring nothing but dishonor to the spirit of my name.

Stan Lee PRESENTS: MASTER OF KUNG FU!

Featuring supporting characters created by SAX ROHMER

SMOKE, BEADS and BLOOD!

"THERE ARE TIMES
WHEN I WISH THE
FOOLISH, TIMES
WHEN I WISH THE
IMPOSSIBLE.

"TONIGHT I WISH...
I HAD A FATHER.

DOUG MOENCH / MIKE ZECK / GENE DAY / JOHN COSTANZA / BOB SHAREN / ROGER STERN / JIM SHOOTER
WRITER / PENCILER / INKER / LETTERER / COLORIST / EDITOR / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

MASTER OF KUNG FU published by MARVEL COMICS GROUP, James E. Galton, President; Stan Lee, Publisher. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 575 MADISON AVENUE, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10022. Published monthly. Copyright ©1979 by Marvel Comics Group, a Division of Cadence Industries Corporation. All rights reserved. Vol. 1, No. 76, May, 1979 issue. Price 40¢ per copy in the U.S.; 40¢ per copy in Canada. Subscription rate \$4.50 for 12 issues. Canada, \$5.50. Foreign, \$6.50. No similarity between any of the names, characters, persons, and/or institutions in this magazine with those of any living or dead person or institution is intended, and any such similarity which may exist is purely coincidental. Printed in the U.S.A. This periodical may not be sold except by authorized dealers and is sold subject to the conditions that it shall not be sold or distributed with any part of its cover or markings removed, nor in a mutilated condition. SHANG-CHI (including all prominent characters featured in the issue), and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of the MARVEL COMICS GROUP. SECOND CLASS POSTAGE PAID AT NEW YORK, N.Y. AND ADDITIONAL MAILING OFFICES.

"LONDON'S LIMEHOUSE DISTRICT..."

WE DO WHAT
WE **MUST**.

WHOOO??

MALAY JAC

BUT **WHY** MUST
WE **DO** IT?

BECAUSE WE
MUST. THERE IS
NO OTHER REA-
SON, NO OTHER
CHOICE, AND,
TRULY, IT WAS
EVER SO.

BUT THERE **MUST**
BE A CHOICE. HOW CAN
MY ENTIRE LIFE BE
A **LIE**? I AM NOT A
FIGHTER, YET I
FIGHT-- AGAIN
AND AGAIN.

THEN YOU **ARE** A
FIGHTER. YOU SIMPLY
RESENT THE TRUTH
OF YOUR IDENTITY.

IT WILL
ACCOMPLISH
NOTHING.

"SMOKE STINGS MY SIGHT..."

BUT I WISH TO ENGAGE
ONLY IN **QUIET** PURSUITS--
THE SEARCH FOR **HARMONY**,
UNIVERSAL PEACE,
SOLITARY TRANQUILITY...

MERE ILLUSIONS.
THE WORLD CARES
NOTHING FOR
HARMONY. INDEED,
IT'S **ONLY**
HARMONY IS
THAT IT CON-
TINUES TO
COEXIST WITH
DISCORD.

NO! I HAVE
KNOWN
HARMONY--
PERFECTION
UNION WITH ANOTHER.
THERE IS A **GIRL**.
SHE IS **BEAUTY**
ITSELF IN BOTH
THOUGHT AND
MOVEMENT AND
SHE--

AH! A "GIRL."
BUT YOU
SPOKE OF
UNIVERSAL
PEACE.

HARMONY
WITH THE
SPIRIT OF **ONE**
OTHER, GIRL
OR NOT, IS
HARDLY
"UNIVERSAL."

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REALIZE THAT
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LIES ON A
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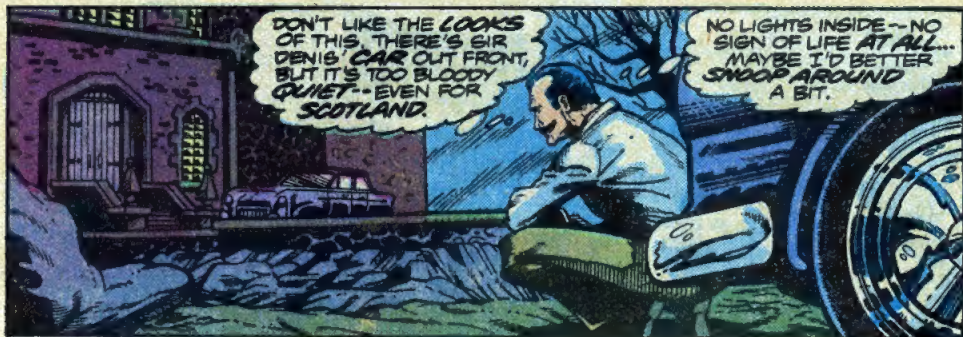
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MASK**

**ARMY
MEDALS**

**WEREWOLF
MASK**

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MEDALS**

1 SATISFACTION GUARANTEED



DON'T LIKE THE LOOKS OF THIS. THERE'S SIR DENIS' CAR OUT FRONT, BUT IT'S TOO BLOODY QUIET--EVEN FOR SCOTLAND.

NO LIGHTS INSIDE--NO SIGN OF LIFE AT ALL... MAYBE I'D BETTER SNOOP AROUND A BIT.



I WOULD ENTERTAIN A QUEST NOW. HIS NAME IS SHANG-CHI.

--AND WE PASS THROUGH BEADS TO MORE STAIRS.



NOW TELL ME, OLD ONE, IF YOUR WISDOM CAN PROVIDE ANY ANSWERS... I BEEG YOU TO TELL ME WHY THE SOUND OF MY NAME--



--SIGNALS NOTHING BUT VIOLENCE?



WHY MUST MY SPIRIT ALWAYS BE SO TORN? SO SHATTERED?

WE ALL DO WHAT WE *MUST*, SHANG-CHI. AS I SAID, IT IS A *STRANGE* WORLD... MUCH DIFFERENT FROM THE ONE IN WHICH I LIVED AT YOUR AGE.



"HIS REPLY IS *INDIRECT*, AS IF SEEKING MY QUESTION THROUGH A PANE OF *SMOKED GLASS*. HAS HE NOT HEARD THE *URGENCY* IN MY PLEA?"

IT IS NOW A WORLD IN WHICH THE ONLY HARMONY IS ACHIEVED BETWEEN DISCORD AND HARMONY ITSELF, BETWEEN *PEACE* AND *VIOLENCE*.



"AND NOW HE REPEATS HIMSELF, WEARILY..."

"... HIS ANCIENT FACE THE VERY SOUL OF A CHINA WHICH NO LONGER EXISTS, SAVE IN FILTHY TRAPS SET IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES. IN MANY WAYS, HIS FACE IS JUST AS *SHATTERED* AS THE SPIRIT OF MY NAME.



A WORLD IN WHICH *MONEY* HAS TAKEN ON GREATER VALUE THAN A MAN'S SPIRIT.

NOW, OLD MAN?

"THEN... HE SHOWS ME *NOTHING* BEHIND THESE BEADS... *NOTHING BUT BETRAYAL*..."



YES... NOW.

AND WE WILL SHARE THE *MONEY* *EVENLY*?



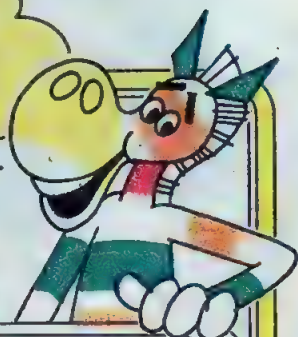
Y-YES... EVENLY.

ALL RIGHT, "*SHANG-CHI*," STEP OUT-- EVERY MOVE *SLOW*-- INTO THE ALLEY.



"NOTHING BUT *BETRAYAL*, AND THE THREAT OF MORE *VIOLENCE*, PERHAPS MORE *FIGHTING*, MORE *BLOOD*... PERHAPS EVEN *DEATH*. I AM... *SICKENED*."

Hey Kids, have as much fun
in Fruit Stripe Land as you do
chewing Fruit Stripe Gum.



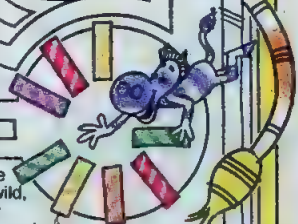
Q: There are two delicious
Fruit Stripe Gums to choose from.
What are they?

A: Fruit Stripe
Regular and
Fruit Stripe Bubble Gum.



Q: Why do we
put all those wild,
colorful, fruity
stripes on every single
stick?

A: To show you that
deeee-licious fruity
Fruit Stripe Flavor.



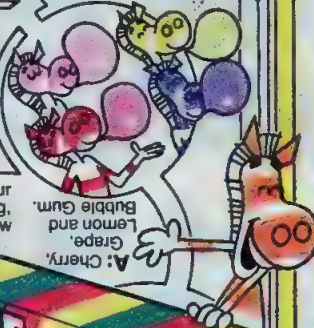
Q: There's a
whole herd of flavors
inside every pack.
How many can
you find?

A: Lemon, Orange,
Cherry, Lime, Grape
and Bubble Gum.
Flavor, too.



Q: What are the four
different kinds of big,
juicy, easy-to-blow
bubbles?

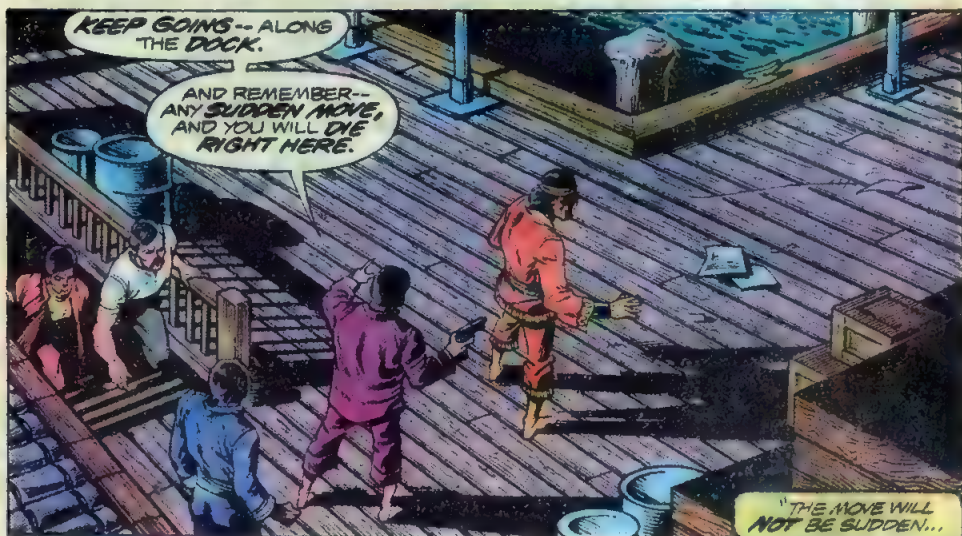
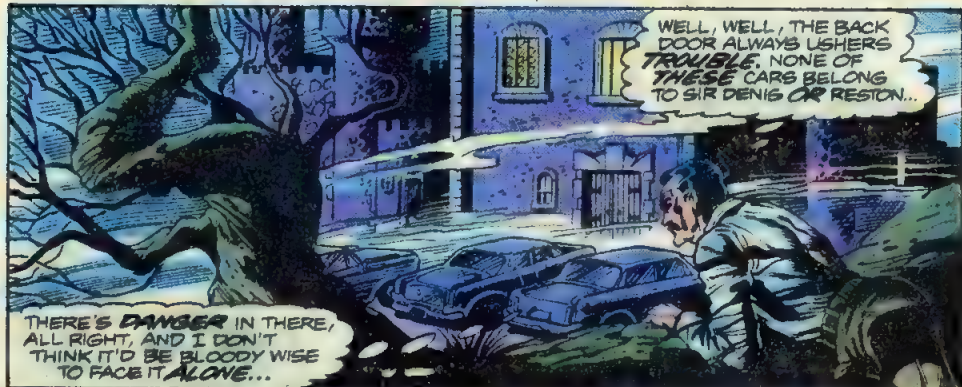
A: Cherry,
Lemon and
Grape
Bubble Gum.



It sure was fun galloping through Fruit Stripe Land with you.

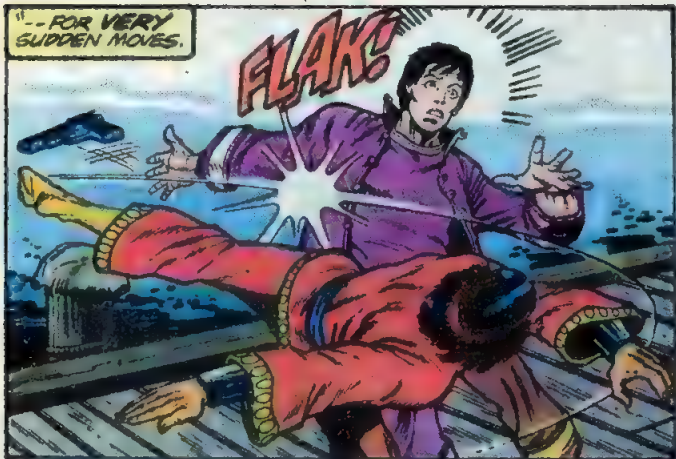
Regular and Bubble Gum
Fruit Stripe Gum
means
Fruit Stripe Gum



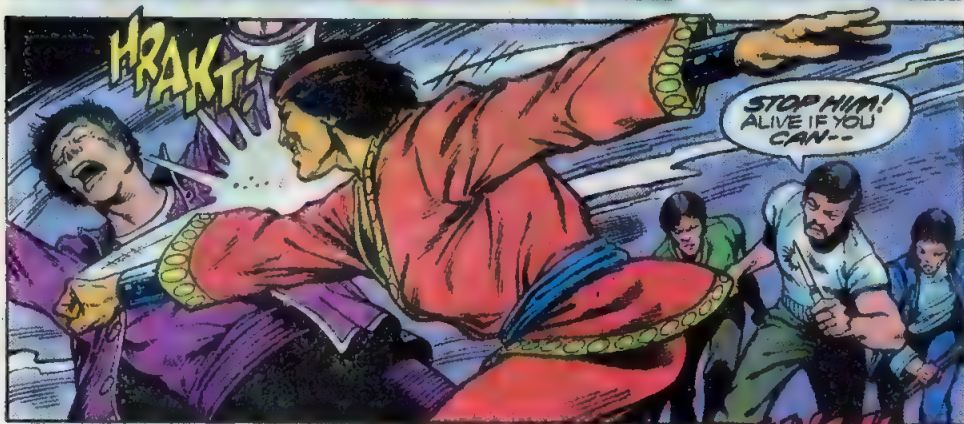


--FOR VERY
SUDDEN MOVES.

FLAK!



HRAKT!



--BUT KILL HIM
IF YOU MU--



KLUNGH!

--LINGHH!



SWUB!

AHRRR

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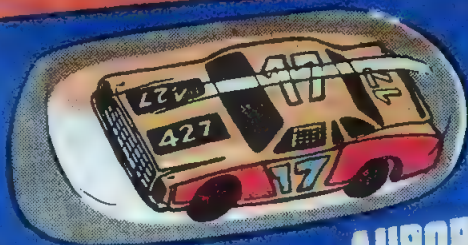
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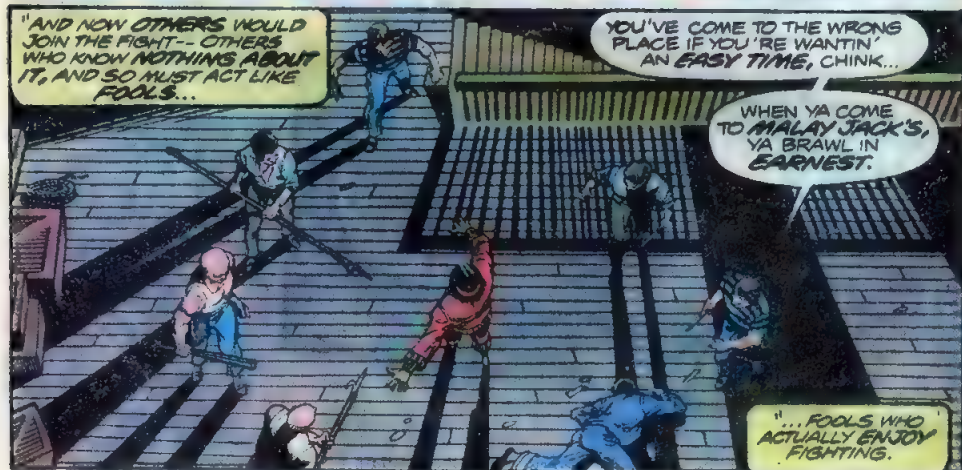
AURORA

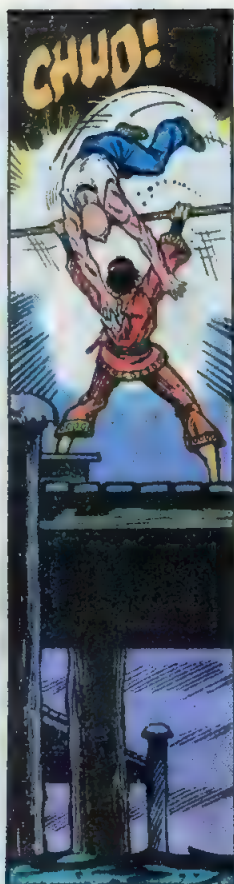
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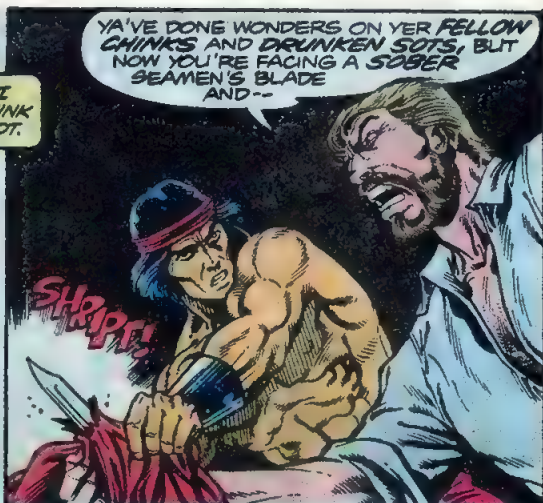
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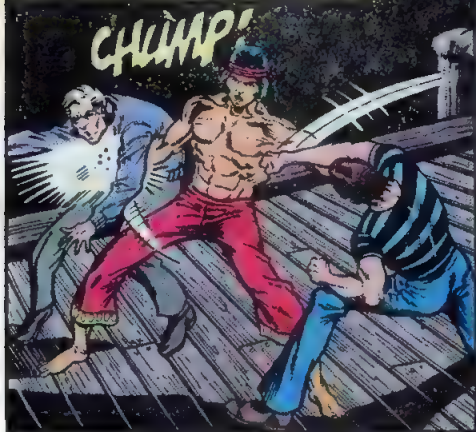




"I THINK NOT."



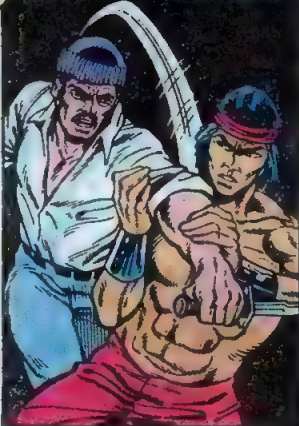
"THEY ABANDON WORDS NOW..."



"...SURRENDERING TO THE SOUNDS..."



"...THE SOUNDS OF VIOLENCE..."



"...FLESH STRIKING FLESH..."



"...THE SURFACE OF ONE MASKING HARD BONE--"



"...SEEKING THE SOFT MUSCLE--"



"...MASKED BY THE OTHER FLESH... ON FLESH."



"BUT NOW THE SOUNDS FADE..."

"...AND DIE."



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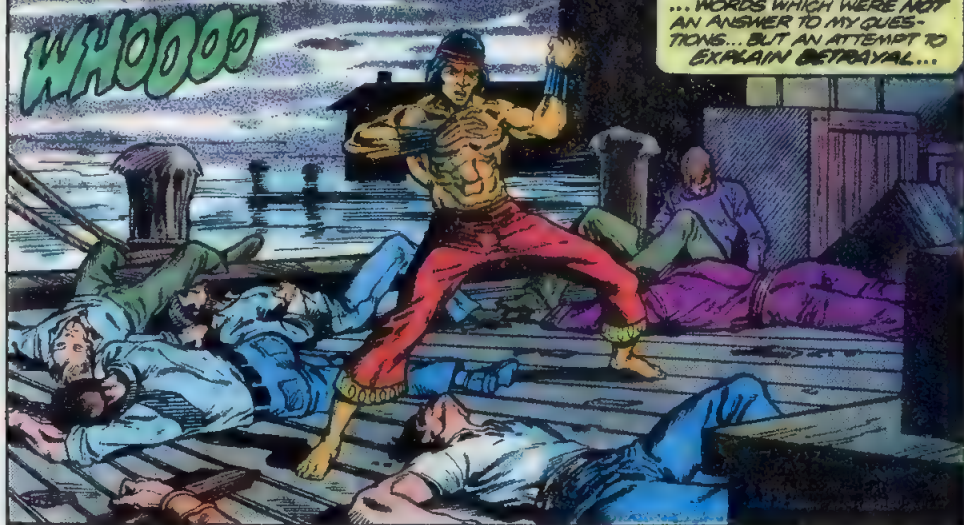
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"AND THERE IS NOTHING BUT THE LOW MOAN OF A
DISTANT TUGBOAT, DRIFTING GHOSTLY FROM THE
EXPECTANT DARKNESS, MUFFLED BY THE SMOKE-
LIKE FOG..."

"AND, TOO, THE LINGERING
ECHOES OF AN OLD MAN'S
WORDS, HEARD BEHIND A
PANE OF SMOKED GLASS
... WORDS WHICH WERE NOT
AN ANSWER TO MY QUES-
TIONS... BUT AN ATTEMPT TO
EXPLAIN BETRAYAL..."



"MONEY."



WHERE WERE YOU
TAKING ME?

TO... THE
ONE CALLED...
ZARAN.
HE HAS...
OFFERED PAYMENT...
FOR YOUR
... DE-
LIVERY.



"MONEY
FOR A PURCHASE
OF BLOOD."



"I REJECT THE
OLD ONE'S EXPLAN-
ATION... AND MY
UNANSWERED
QUESTION WILL
CONTINUE TO MOCK
ME."

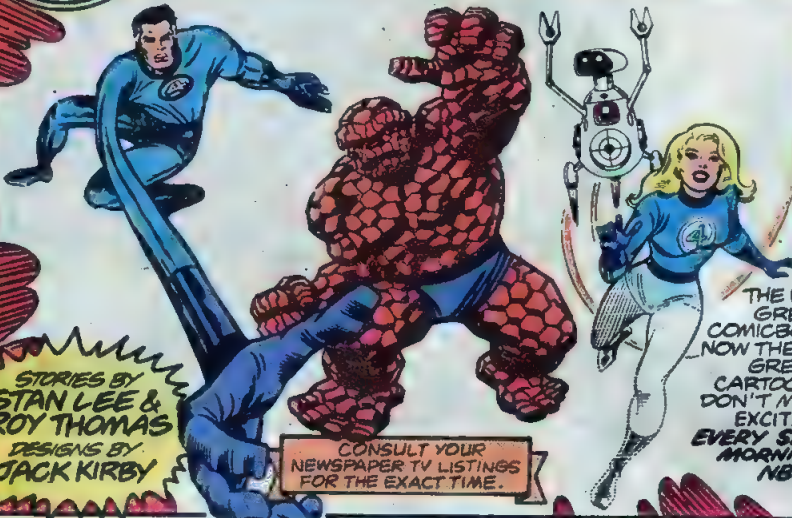


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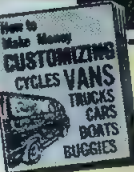
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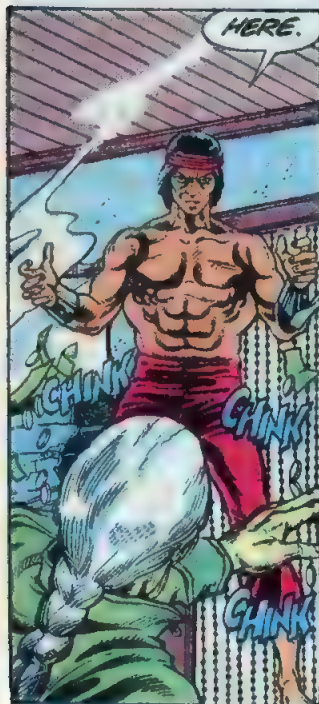
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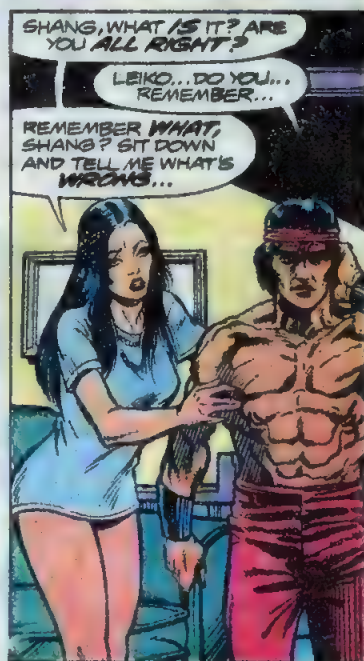
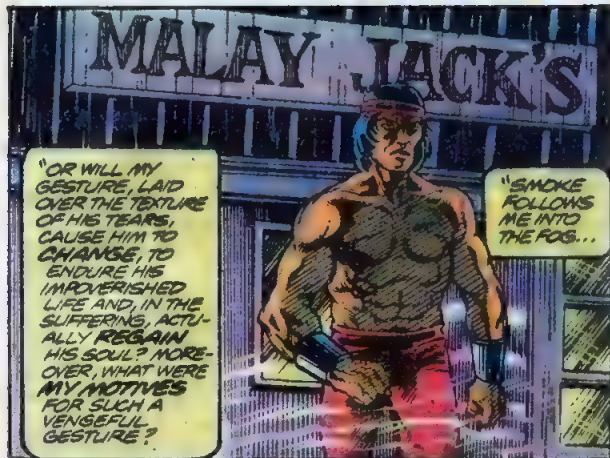
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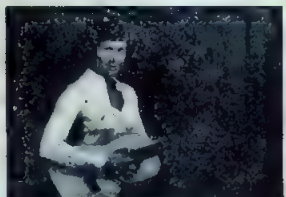
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LEIKO, DO YOU REMEMBER...
THE *TIME* WE HAD TOGETHER...
NOT LONG AGO? IT LASTED
ALMOST *TWO WEEKS*...

YES...YES, I REMEMBER, SHANG, BUT...

WE HAD EACH OTHER, AND WE
SEEMED TO BE ALONE, YET A PART OF
EVERYTHING. THE WORLD SEEMED
TO *ACCEPT* US, YET WAS WILLING
TO LET US BE.

WE HAD...
FILMS, AND
MUSIC. YOU
TAUGHT ME
CHESS...AND
WE LOOKED
THROUGH
YOUR
BOOKS...

SO MANY PAINTINGS AND
DRAWINGS... ALL IN
ONE BOOK...

YES,
SHANG, THEY
WERE GOOD
TIMES... *NIGHT*
TIMES...

I WATCHED YOU
MAKE STAINED GLASS,
AND WE HAD STRANGE
FOOD... AND THEN...
YOUR *PUZZLE*...

YOU FINISHED IT...JUST
THAT NIGHT... AND WE
WERE *WHOLE, TOGETHER*,
TWO PARTS OF ONE THING,
AND IT WAS BEAUTIFUL...

...THAT *LAST*
NIGHT...

...AND THEN...IT
WAS... SHATTERED.

BTHUMP

OH
SHANG...

AND IT WAS
OVER.



YOUR PUZZLE WAS SHATTERED, LEIKO, AND THERE WAS ANOTHER FIGHT, MORE BLOOD, ALWAYS ANOTHER FIGHT, ALWAYS SOMEONE ATTACKING, AND IT WAS OVER. I WANT TO KNOW, LEIKO-- YOU MUST TELL ME...

...WAS IT EVER REALLY THERE OR WAS IT MERE SMOKE, PHANTOMS OF SMOKE WEAVING THROUGH OUR WISHFUL MINDS? DID WE REALLY SHARE THOSE NIGHT TIMES, LEIKO?

TELL ME. PLEASE.



OH, YES, SHANG, YES. WE SHARED. IT WAS REAL, AND IT WAS BEAUTIFUL...

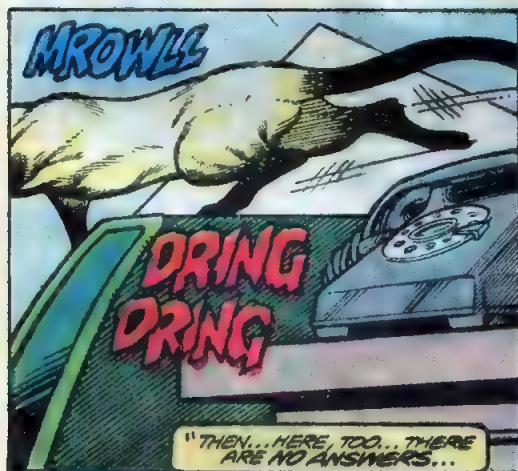
THEN WHY, LEIKO?



WHY DID IT HAVE TO END? WHY WERE WE DENIED ANY MORE OF IT? WHAT DID WE DO TO BE DENIED? WHY MUST OUR SHARING OF SO LITTLE HAPPINESS AND PEACE BE MEASURED AGAINST SO MUCH VIOLENCE?



I... OHMM



MROWL

DRING
DRING

"THEN... HERE, TOO... THERE ARE NO ANSWERS..."



H-HELLO?

SNF

OH... BLACK JACK?

BULLPEN BULLETINS

STAN'S SOAPBOX

Hey, it's too much! You wouldn't believe the way the mail is pouring in with questions and comments about our *Marvelous TV shows*! The one query we most frequently hit with is "How can we, the Marvel readers, make our opinions known?" Well, culture lovers, even though there are no letter columns or Bullpen Bulletins on TV, there's one foolproof way for you to broadcast your own reactions to our titanic little TV tidbits. Just write a letter or postcard with your comments, criticisms, or congratulations about our live-action shows to CBS-TV 51 West 52nd St., New York, N.Y. 10019; or, if you wanna yak about the new *Fantastic Four* Saturday morning cartoon series, mail your missive to NBC-TV 3000 West Alameda Ave; Burbank, CA 91523.

In other words, all you need to write to the television network on which the program is presented, and remember—the mail they receive really does make a difference! Y'know, when the *Dr. Strange* two-hour movie was first shown on CBS a few months ago, dozens of people told me how much they enjoyed it. But when I asked if they had dropped a note to

CBS telling how they felt, not one of them had thought to do so, because they hadn't realized that their letters would matter. So, a word to the wise. (And who ever heard of an unwise Marvelite?) Your opinions really do count—but only if you let the network know!

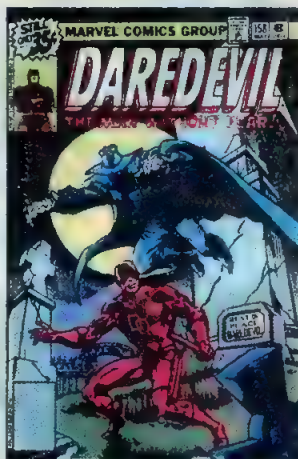
And, speaking of letting people know, if you happen to be in or near Miami, Florida on April 7th, drop by the Holiday Inn, 110th Street and Biscayne Blvd., in North Miami, and say hello. I'll be there, whoopin' it up for ol' Marvel, as usual, at the famous Miamicon 2, which runs from April 6th through the 8th, where it's always great to greet a horde of true believers!

So, till we meet again, let's all ponder the imperishable words of Irving Forbush: "Never hassle a howling Hulk—you wouldn't like him when he's angry!" Or, as we say in the Bullpen: "Never thrike an ailing Asgardian—you wouldn't like him when he's Thor!" (Forgive me ganging—it's been a tough day!)

Excelsior!

Stan

ITEM! In this column we often ramble on shamelessly about how well we're doing on various titles, and how wonderfully we've impressed ourselves with whatever new special project is on the fire at the moment. The fact is, without exception, the hype herein stems from sincere excitement about the creative endeavors we blurb, but sometimes it must seem to you that we're pushing our wares too hard. Now, we were going to start off this month's news with a wowie-kazowie rave about our impending almost-a-shoe-in TV deal for none other than *SPIDER-WOMAN*, and pat ourselves on the back for the terrific job that we've done with the character, but with our aforementioned worries in mind—well, we just can't in many ways, we have every right to brag—after all, who can knock success? We've had terrific penciling issue after issue by Carmine Infantino, top-notch scripting by both longtime superstar Mary Wolfman and talented upstart Mark Gruenwald, and nifty inking by recent discovery Al Gordon. Even the coloring's been outstanding. What's more, the mail response has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic and the sales have been pretty good! With a TV deal in the offing, who, you may well inquire, could ask for anything more? Frankly, we could. Maybe we're crazy to want to tamper with a winner,



but there just seemed to be something missing from *Spider-Woman*. As any pro will tell you, something can be very good without being "right". The best art and the best wordsmithing

don't always guarantee that special magic in a series—that happy harmony in the creative effort that makes a book a standout. Not being the type of folks to settle for less than perfect, several weeks ago, Jim Shooter, Mark Gruenwald, Mary Wolfman, Jim Salicrup, and Stan the Man himself settled into Stan's office, ordered up lunch (on the company!) and spent the entire afternoon talking things out, analyzing our approach to *Spider-Woman*, discussing who she is, why she is that way, and how to best portray her. It was a long, exhausting brainsession—but worth it, because a lot of things fell into place! At last, we think we've got it! *Spider-Woman* #14 ought to be on sale soon after you read this. If you should happen to buy a copy, (and we certainly hope you will) be sure and write in and tell us how we're doing. After all, you folks out there have the final word!

ITEM! All humility aside, we'd like to mention that we happened to have produced a few of the best comics ever, anywhere, which are on sale right now! For instance? Well, how about *DAREDEVIL* #158, which brings you the long-awaited revelation of the secret of *Deathstalker*. Roger McKenzie wrote it, Frank Miller penciled it, Klaus Janson inked it, and, no two ways about it, it's magnificent. Another out-and-out triumph is *THOR* #283, by Roy Thomas, John Buscema and Chic Stone, featuring a tale entitled, "Suddenly...the Celestials!" Still another smash is *MICRONAUTS* #5, "The Prometheus Pit", by Bill Mantlo, Mike Golden and Joe Rubinstein. There are *other* great comics from Marvel this month, of course, but we'll leave for you the joy of discovering them. Check out your local newsstand. We have a hunch you'll love what you find.



ITEM! Just a quick parting note. Many people have written in asking just who it is who writes this crazy column. Most folks presume it's Smilin' Stan, since his is the only signature on the whole bullpen page, but, in fact, Stan writes only the soapbox part of the page. Ye Olde Editor-in-Chief pens these lines, and hereby is declared responsible for all dumb mistakes herein. So, there! The truth, at last, is out. Now can we please lay to rest the rumor that Jim Shooter has fled to Borneo babbling something about schedules?

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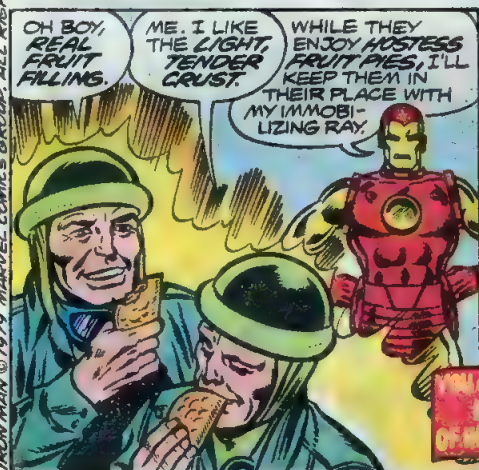
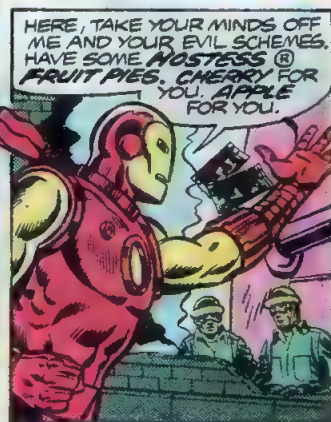
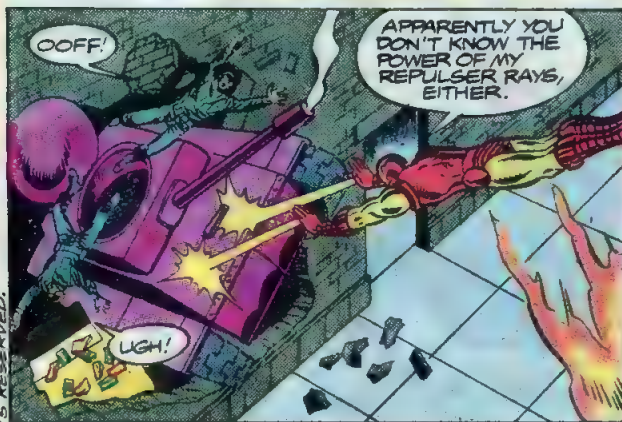
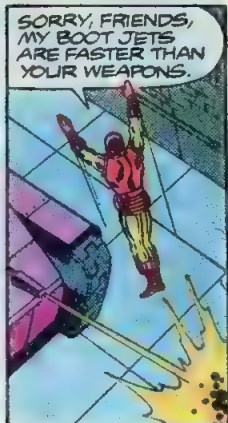
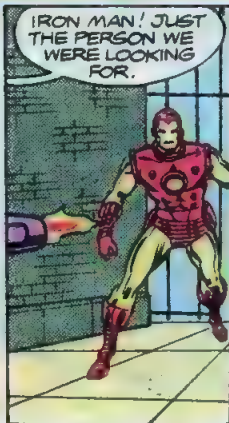
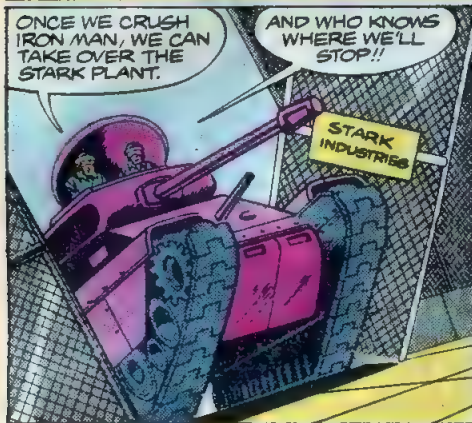
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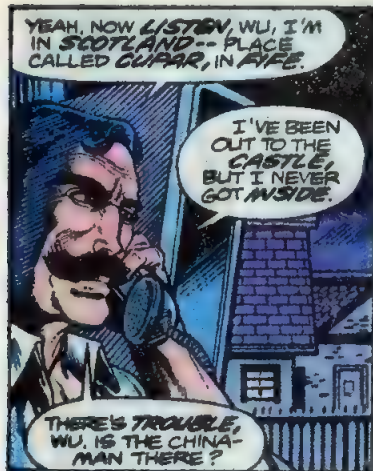
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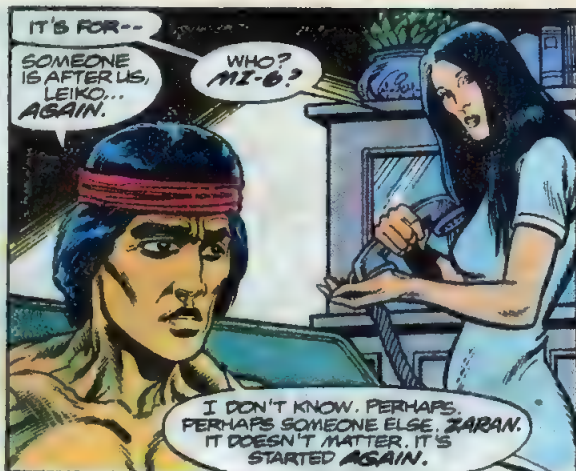
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YEAH, NOW LISTEN, WU, I'M IN SCOTLAND-- PLACE CALLED GUJAR, IN AYE.

I'VE BEEN OUT TO THE CASTLE, BUT I NEVER GOT INSIDE.

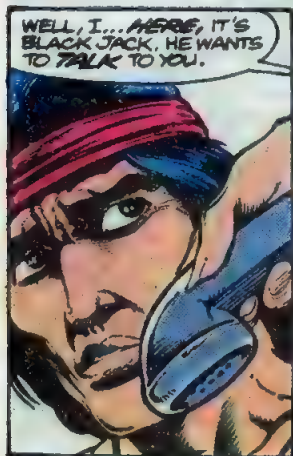
THERE'S TROUBLE, WU. IS THE CHINA-MAN THERE?



IT'S FOR--
SOMEONE IS AFTER US, LEIKO... AGAIN.

WHO?
MI-6?

I DON'T KNOW. PERHAPS. PERHAPS SOMEONE ELSE. ZARAN. IT DOESN'T MATTER. IT'S STARTED AGAIN.

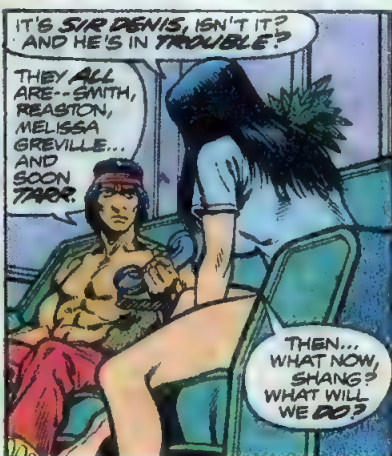


WELL, I... HERE, IT'S BLACK JACK. HE WANTS TO TALK TO YOU.



"I LISTEN, ALREADY KNOWING WHAT TARR'S WORDS WILL BE.

YES. GOOD-BYE.



IT'S SIR DENIS, ISN'T IT? AND HE'S IN TROUBLE?

THEY ALL ARE-- SMITH, REASON, MELISSA GREVILLE... AND SOON TARR.

THEN... WHAT NOW, SHANG? WHAT WILL WE DO?



WE WILL DO... WHAT WE MUST.

"FOR, AS A MAN WISE TO THE WAYS OF THIS WORLD HAS SAID: IT WAS EVER SO."

MISSIVES TO THE MASTER!

c/o MARVEL COMICS GROUP
575 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10022

ROGER STERN
EDITOR
JIM SALICRUP
ASSISTANT EDITOR

We received a *monster* of a letter some time ago and we've been sitting on it ever since, wondering just what to do. It's far too long to print in its exhaustive entirety, yet far too intriguing and stimulating to completely ignore. We're not exactly pleased with the solution that follows, and we apologize to Cat Yronwode for the liberties taken with her letter, but herewith are excerpts amounting to little more than a third of her original missive...

Hello Doug,

As I mentioned a while back, I'm a relative newcomer to MASTER OF KUNG FU (started with #62) but I've since acquired a set of back issues and just spent all night reading them. It's dawn now—and between too little sleep and too much coffee, what follows will of necessity be random but sincere. Take only as directed...

*The so-called "6-part epic" (actually, about 12 parts by my reckoning) was a real highlight and compared favorably with any of my all-time favorite comics. It was crafted so beautifully in both art & story that I was very shaken by the time I realized poor Lerner was going to die. Comics rarely make me tremble with excitement, but this one did. I felt the same tension I do in a good movie, and I wanted to scream, "No, Lerner! Get out while you still can!"...but then it was too late. I don't think MOKF has touched that level of intensity since, although the "China Seas" multi-parter was certainly a good try—but Koger is no Fu Manchu and the real was not Paul Gulacy.

*You must feel awfully guilty about something to let Bill Wu push your knee-jerk liberalism button so often. Sure, Sax Rohmer apparently disliked Orientals and Eurasians. He also apparently disliked Jews and women. So what? I'm a Jew and a woman & I still love his stuff. When I get to something too gross to handle, I just chuckle and forgive him his stupidities. He lived in a different age. If he were born, like you, in 1948, and held those opinions now, I'd think he was a sickie—but for there and then, it's past and it's not going to hurt me. As you know, there are more middle class male Caucasian villains in the Marvel Universe than any other brand, and the reason nobody complains is that the heroes fall primarily in the same category. Your introduction of Oriental/female heroes & heroines is sufficient justification for Oriental/female villains; don't delete them simply because they give Mr. Wu ants in his pants. On only one point do I agree with Bill, and that's the *protesque* skin color employed for certain Orientals in earlier issues. If the artists can't draw Orientals, they shouldn't rely on colorists to falsely create them with Dr. Martin's dyes. Remember the early Ditko & Kirby Caucasian black men with purple skin? Gulacy's photographic-realism style is all the more appreciated because he avoided such missteps.

*The Melissa/Clive/Leiko/Shang-Chi/Juliette/Cat/Pavane/Velcro/Mordillo game of musical beds fascinates me. It is so real. I don't know about you, Doug, but I find it hard to believe you got the idea for this from reading SUPERMAN as a child. I mean, I've never seen a comic delve so deeply, yet so tastefully, into the emotional tangles of adult life. Clive's showdowns with Leiko are particularly affecting—as well as supplying a brittle tension within the interactions of the entire group. Everyone must take sides—Clive virtually *forces* them to do so—and then he's bitter when nobody takes his side. You also have a sure touch for depicting rivalries and repressed emotions between team members—especially when Lerner was alive, and now between Shang-Chi and Smith.

*The continuity debacle following Gulacy's departure was a serious matter. Had I been reading MOKF then, I just might have dropped out. No title is immune to this kind of catastrophe, of course, but this one was worse than most.

*Craig and Zeck are all right (Craig swipes Gulacy swiping Steranko very sensitively) but they lack *detail* and their layouts are too straight, their Shang-Chi figures too stocky, and their sense of moodiness underdeveloped. (There are, however, very good signs pointing to Mike Zeck's improvement. MOKF #68 marks the first time since Gulacy's departure that I didn't wince as I skimmed the art in search of your story. And Zeck's layouts are definitely improving.)

*It's about time for the return of Dr. Fu Manchu, no matter what Bill Wu thinks!

"Throughout the entire history of the strip, Shang-Chi has been getting progressively more *angry* and I'm not sure I like it. This increasing deterioration of his internal cool *could* work up into some good plot developments, however, and I hope this is your intention...

"In general, Doug, I think you're doing remarkable work on this title in terms of literary technique, exclusive of the content or plots. The latest issue, #68, is a good example. The layout of page 2 as a 3-way split screen with voice-over narration; the constantly repetitive fragments of flashback, each glimpse bearing a significant variation from the others until, like a pointillist painting, some form of truth is constructed at last; the almost rococo lavishness of contrasting juxtapositions ("I will not face his test nor will I fight him," then: "I enter Po Lin Monastery to face his test,")—all these sophisticated subtleties delight me no end. The truest compliment I can pay you is the admission that my praise is futile. You don't need me to tell you how good you are.

*The constant and repeated emphasis on *water* in this strip ("River of Death," "China Seas," images of pools, swamps, fountains, bathtubs, boats, lagoons, islands, grottos, waterfalls, shores, ships, sewers, fogs, ice, the tides, and more) goes far beyond the "atmospheric" and enters the realm of the archetypal. Your Pisces nature reveals itself again and again. And the fighter jets always give way to the wharves in my mind's eye, too. MASTER OF KUNG FU is a story nurtured in *water*. What a wealth of imagery resides in this! I think of San Francisco now: the Transamerica Pyramid crowding so closely upon Chinatown—ultra-tech and Oriental barbarity on the Bay. Jimmy Woo lives there too...

I've written myself out and it's time to choose between sleeping through the day or gussying it out on coffee. Thank you for keeping me up all night, and please accept both my advice and criticism in the spirit of friendliness. I consider MOKF to be one of the very best comics currently published.

Cat Yronwode
Route 1, Box 43
Mtn. Grove, Mo. 65711

See what we mean? We could easily spend another entire page merely commenting on Cat's comments! There is so much to say, and absolutely no room in which to say it. (Come to think of it, maybe we should start publishing a monthly spinoff book called MISSIVES TO THE MASTER...) Anyway, the best we can do is invite the rest of you to comment on any or all of Cat's opinions. Then, when we print those letters in some future column, maybe we'll have a chance to get our two cents' worth in. Fair enough?

NEXT ISSUE: The spiffiest, zippiest martial arts/spy-type action story in a long time—with a brand new villain and an extended fight sequence you ain't gonna believe, not to mention a mildly stunning climax. It's called "Weapons" and if you miss it, how will you ever know how sorry you should be? So don't be sorry, huh?, but...be good.

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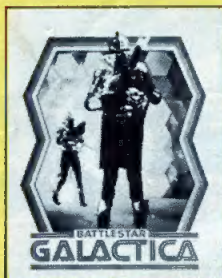
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